

CARBUSTERS

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BIKE-SHARING
WORLD CARFREE DAY
INTERVIEW: PROFESSOR KNOFLACHER
B:C:CLETTES





It seems that the car is in trouble. It's difficult to write anything at the moment without referring to the financial crisis, for good reason: the last couple of months have been incredibly damaging for carmakers worldwide. The credit crash in the US (page 18) left some of the biggest carmakers nursing severely whip-lashed necks: both GM and Ford's stocks have plunged, and sales have dropped significantly. Struggling to compete with more efficient and economical imports American auto-giants appealed for a US\$25 billion loan, which the US Congress kindly approved. European carmakers pushed for a similar €40 billion 'green' bailout to help them meet 'stringent' EU emissions targets – which was rejected. In Japan and the UK sales dropped by around 25%, with sales also dropping in China, Brazil, Germany, France and India. Add to this the proposed average emissions target of 120g of CO₂ per kilometre set by the European Commission and it seems that the auto-industry is on the back foot – it's being forced into a defensive position.

The financial crisis is a baffling thing, but one thing is clear: the auto-industry is not as powerful as it makes out – without government support Ford and GM would now potentially be bankrupt. Even more simply, without car sales, carmakers cannot survive. They are moving to more efficient models, hybrids and electric cars because larger models, such as SUVs, have dive-bombed in popularity over the last year – they are no longer selling. It is a tactical move by the carmakers to ensure survival.

This is where we step in. We all know that change is needed if we want to move towards a more sustainable world – and removing unnecessary cars would be a great start. The grip the car has on society is still strong, but it is weakening. Professor Knoflachner claims to have discovered where this stranglehold takes place in our brain (page 19) and how to best remedy it – and is on a one-man mission to do so. Bike-sharing (page 12) is becoming increasingly popular and removes the need for unnecessary inner-city cars, filling the gaps in current transportation systems; it is also perhaps altering our perception of possession (page 14). World Carfree Day was bigger than ever – demonstrating that a carfree city is a fun, but also economically viable place to live in. The bicycle is also potentially one of our most effective weapons against the auto-industry: it has been used as a tool for revolution before (Ferrara, page 10), and is still being used as one today (B:C:Cettes, page 22). This year and the next will be important for the carfree community; the carmakers are in trouble and we should be there to provide an even stronger vision of a carfree future. So to paraphrase the Cettes, if you want to be part of the dance-dance-party revolution, you'd better get some bike-parking.

Sam Fleet



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